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ABSTRACT

A study was designed to determine what student factors contributed to the 36% failure rate on a required competency test in writing at Southwest Texas State University and to assess the perceived impact of this test requirement on both faculty and students. Data were collected to establish a student profile of the student most likely to fail the barrier exam. Factors analyzed included grade point average (GPA), gender, college major, race, grades in English courses, and student status related to whether the student transferred to the university. Findings showed that GPA, ethnicity, class standing, and major can be used to identify students who may fail the exam. High risk students are community college transfer students, minorities, and students with GPA's below 2.5. Two questionnaires surveying student and faculty perceptions of the exam showed that students in general were opposed to the exam, that students who had not yet taken the exam were confident they would pass it, and that both faculty and students recommended that more writing should be required in all classes. Recommendations for increasing the number of students passing the test include the following: (1) identify students at risk and develop programs for them; (2) increase entrance requirements; and (3) review the content of all "writing intensive" classes. (Five tables of data are included.) (SR)

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AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS WHICH PREDICT FAILURE RATES ON WRITING COMPETENCY TESTS

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ABSTRACT

At a regional southwest university, the average pass rate for the General Examination in English Composition is 70 percent (n=1,823) Grade point average, ethnicticity, class standing, and major can be used to identify students who may fail the exam.. In addition, faculty and students responding to surveys designed to assess perceptions of the test propose modifications and offer recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

In response to national concern that competence in writing among college graduates is declining, Southwest Texas State University (SWT) has implemented a "barrier examination" in writing designed to assess the writing skills of students before allowing them to enroll in more than 15 hours of junior-senior level courses. By requiring students to pass the barrier exam, SWT is attempting to raise students' skills in English grammar and composition.

Since its implementation in October 1987, this exam has been a source of controversy among faculty and students . In SWT's quest for increased academic standards, the university has discovered that after three administrations, 36 percent of the students taking this exam for the first time fail. This level is above the 30 percent failure rate which was deemed acceptable by the university.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, the study is designed to determine what student factors contribute to the failure rate on competency tests in writing. Factors analyzed include grade point average (GPA), gender, college major, race, grades in English courses, and student status related to

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whether or not the student transferred to the university. Second, the study was designed to assess the perceived impact of this test requirement on both faculty and students.

Significance of the Study

This study will establish a profile of the student most likely to fail the barrier exam. It will provide a guide to pinpoint those students who have a potentially high risk of failing. In addition, this study will present insight into student and faculty attitudes related to the exam.

Major Research Questions

The major questions which are of importance to this study are:

1. What are the common characteristics of those students who fail the writing exam?
2. Can a model be developed to predict the score of students who have not yet taken the exam?
3. What are students and professors' attitudes concerning the exam?

In an attempt to answer these general questions, several specific questions were developed to guide the research:

1. Does GPA correlate with test scores received?
2. Is there a statistical difference in scores received related to gender?
3. Is there a statistical difference in scores received related to race?
4. Is there a statistical difference in scores received related to college major?
5. Do grades received in freshman English courses correlate with test scores received?
6. Do grades received in courses labeled "writing intensive" correlate with test scores received?
7. Is there a statistical difference between scores received by transfer students and scores received by non-transfer students?

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations to this research may exist. Due to the time available to collect and analyze data, some aspects of the student profile, such as SAT and ACT scores, could not be investigated. The student profiles were developed from historical data. As with any historical data, a possibility exists that clerical errors could have been made in the collection of the original data. Other factors which make up the student profile were not quantitifible, including the amount of test anxiety a student experiences and other circumstances influencing the student of the day of the text. The researchers were unable to procure the opinions of those students who left SWT due to their inability to pass the barrier exam.

Definitions

For the purpose of this report, the following definitions will apply:

Junior college students--those students who have attended a two-year institution or community college.

Cumulative GPA--the total grade-point average for all SWT and transfer courses.

SWT GPA--the grade-point average for SWT grades only

Writing intensive courses--those courses which contain no less than sixty-five percent of the student grade in the form of written work and one written assignment exceeding 500 words.

S.L.A.C.--the Student Learning Activity Center; a faculty directed learning resource center housed in the university library. S.L.A.C. conducts tutoring and specialized programs in reading, writing, math and study skills.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Beginning with the 1986-1988 catalog, SWT required students to pass the General Examination in English Competency (GEEC). This test must be passed by students before enrolling in more than fifteen hours of upper-division (junior/senior) courses.

To design and develop the test, faculty at SWT used an experienced and well-known testing company to develop the barrier exam. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) and its General Examination in English Competency (GEEC) was selected. The GEEC measures skills required in most first year college composition courses. It measures the writing skills needed for college assignments, and in particular, for writing that explains, interprets, analyzes, or presents and supports a point of view.

The GEEC contains two sections. Section one has 55 multiple choice questions which must be answered within 45 minutes. Section one focuses on logical, structural, and grammatical relationships within sentences. The type of questions presented in section one require the test taker to:

1. Identify wording that is ambiguous or unclear or that violates the standard conventions of writing discourse.
2. Choose the version of a phrase or sentence that conveys the intended meaning.
3. Choose the best version of a sentence that has been reworded to change emphasis in phrasing or to improve clarity.

The second section requires the student to write an essay in response to an assigned topic. The test taker is expected to present a point of view on the topic and to support it with a logical argument and with appropriate evidence. The essays are scored by college English faculty from throughout the United States. Each essay is scored independently by two different readers. If the scores greatly vary, a third and final grader scores the essay and the weighted score of the readers is combined with the multiple choice score to give the total test score.

To pass the GEEC, students must earn a minimum score of 421 points from a total of 800 points. In accordance with the guidelines from the American Council on Education, the SWT faculty committee selected the cutoff score of 421 which is at the 22nd percentile of the national norm. This score is equivalent to writing on the freshman level of college and is perceived as the lowest acceptable score on this examination by ETS and the American Council on Education.

The GEEC was chosen for both its validity and reliability. For content validity of the exam, appropriate faculty members reviewed the content outline and sample questions to ensure that the test covers, to a reasonable degree, the core material taught in their courses.

The reliability coefficient for the essay form of the GEEC test is estimated to be .88 This reliability coefficient indicates that individuals would obtain very similar scores if they took another form of the test.

The University Testing Center administers the test during the first week of October, March, and June. The test has been given nine times with the first test administered in October, 1987. In this study, only data from three administrations were analyzed. However, 1990 pass/fail rates are almost identical to those reported in 1988.

METHODOLOGY

Discussion of the methodology is divided into two distinct parts. The first part describes the data collection process of historical information which was used to develop a student profile. The second part describes the collection of data from surveys of students and faculty at SWT.

Data Collection--Student Profile

The primary data used in the development of the student profile were collected from the actual test results for the March, June, and October 1988. These results included the student name, gender, race, class standing, test score, SWT cumulative GPA and major. The March and June 1988 test results also included the transfer status of the students as well as information concerning where the students took their English classes. Characteristics for

1,843 students who took the exam were entered into a Lotus 123 spreadsheet program. The data were sorted alphabetically by the students' names. The alphabetized list was then compared to the transcripts for those students who took the June 1988 test. A record was made of where the student took the second composition course or its equivalent. The same list of data was also compared to the SLAC log books to determine which students sought help from the SLAC lab, when they sought help, and how many times they sought help.

At this point in the research process, due to the sensitive nature of the information, all names were erased from the computer files to protect the confidentiality of the students.

Data Collection--Faculty and Student Surveys

Two surveys were conducted at SWT during the fall of 1988. One surveyed student perceptions of GEEC and the other surveyed faculty perceptions. In order to obtain a representative sample of students, classes were randomly chosen from the Fall 1988 Schedule of Classes. A minimum of one class was surveyed from each of the seven Colleges/Schools at SWT. Seven of the 13 total classes surveyed were writing intensive classes. Professors of the selected classes were surveyed for their perceptions of the GEEC. They were contacted first by letter which was followed with a phone call or office visit. In addition, all English teachers and writing intensive teachers were asked to complete a one-page survey which was delivered by campus mail.

Description of the Survey Instruments

The student survey consisted of a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey and the actual questionnaire. The survey was designed to determine the attitudes of those students who have already taken the GEEC. In addition, the survey was also designed to discover the perceptions of those students who have not yet taken the exam.

All professors teaching English and/or writing intensive courses during the fall 1988 semester were asked to complete the one-page survey. The instrument was designed to determine the perceived effect of the exam on English and writing intensive classroom curriculum and to determine the attitudes of professors concerning this type of exam.

Both surveys were pretested before being implemented. The student survey was reviewed by three professors as well as by two graduating seniors who were required to take the GEEC test. The faculty survey was also reviewed by three professors before being distributed through campus mail.

Analysis of Data--Student Profile

The first step in the analysis of the student profile data was to generate statistics for the total population of students taking the test, including the

percentage of students passing the test, the average test score, and the standard deviation of the data. These general statistics were used as the starting point for further hypothesis formation and analysis which are discussed in the findings.

Next, a series of hypothesis tests were completed to compare various student characteristics to the population norm. The following null hypothesis was tested for each characteristic: There is no statistical difference between the proportion of students who passed the GEEC and the proportion of all students who took the test.

The critical value of .05 was chosen for the hypothesis tests. If the passing rate of a particular group was significantly lower or higher than the passing rate of the total population, the Z score generated from the hypothesis test is above or below the critical value of 1.96 and -1.96, respectively. The student data were then analyzed using multiple linear regression.

Analysis of Data--Faculty and Student Surveys

The data received from the faculty and student surveys were tabulated into frequency charts to establish the viewpoints of each group concerning the "barrier test."

FINDINGS

This study resulted in several important findings that are of significance. The specific research questions are answered below, followed by the general questions of particular importance to the SWT faculty committee.

Research Questions

1. Are there statistical differences between the scores received on the three tests, the class ranking of the students, the gender of students, or the race of students?

The following tables summarize the significant differences between individual tests, class ranking, gender, and race.

TABLE 1

DIFFERENCES AMONG CLASS, GENDER, AND RACE

CHARACTERISTIC	SCORE AVERAGE	STANDARD DEVIATION	# OF STUDENTS FAIL	PASS	TOTAL	PERCENT PASSING	Z SCORE
ALL TESTS	451.49	73.99	675	1168	1843	63.37%	
Test 1	459.31	74.79	199	412	611	67.43%	1.814
Test 2	446.53	75.41	291	414	705	58.72%	-2.165
Test 3	449.07	70.32	185	342	527	64.90%	0.640
CLASS							
Fresh	447.36	64.13	31	43	74	58.11%	-0.921
Sophomores	458.04	69.31	184	389	573	67.89%	1.971
Juniors	448.30	76.33	256	419	675	62.07%	-0.599
Seniors	449.01	76.68	204	317	521	60.84%	-1.055
GENDER							
Females	459.83	72.55	326	700	1026	68.23%	2.613
Males	441.03	74.45	349	468	817	57.28%	-2.979
RACE							
Caucasians	458.96	72.15	469	972	1441	67.45%	2.434
Blacks	417.42	77.29	35	31	66	46.97%	-2.709
Hispanics	428.65	71.50	136	140	276	50.72%	-4.032
Other	414.73	81.76	35	26	61	42.62%	-3.298

As shown in Table 1, there is a statistical difference between the score achieved by students taking the second administration versus either the first or third tests. The second test showed a significantly lower passing rate than either the first or third tests. There was a statistically significant difference between the various class rankings; sophomores passed the test at a significantly higher rate than freshmen, juniors, or seniors. A significant difference between passing rates and gender existed with females displaying a significantly higher passing rate of 68.2 percent compared to the male passing rate of 57.2 percent. A major difference appeared among races. Caucasians were the only group which had a significantly higher passing rate of 67.4 percent. Blacks had the lowest passing rate of 46.9 percent. Table 2 shows the statistical differences between race and gender.

TABLE 2

DIFFERENCES WITH RACE/GENDER

CHARACTERISTIC	SCORE AVERAGE	STANDARD DEVIATION	# OF STUDENTS FAIL	PASS	TOTAL	PERCENT PASSING	Z SCORE
FEMALE/RACE							
Caucasian	467.4	69.50	224	578	802	72.07%	4.33
Black	431.7	78.74	19	20	39	51.28%	-1.54
Hispanic	431.5	73.22	71	88	159	55.35%	-2.00
Others	440.0	91.34	12	14	26	53.85%	-1.00
Non Caucasian	432.5	76.55	102	122	224	54.46%	-2.60
MALE/RACE							
Caucasians	448.3	73.98	245	394	639	61.66%	4.33
Black	396.7	70.16	16	11	27	40.74%	-2.41
Hispanic	424.7	68.91	65	52	117	44.44%	-4.09
Others	395.3	67.44	23	11	34	32.35%	-3.70
Non Caucasian	414.8	77.39	104	74	178	41.57%	-5.70

When race and gender are taken into account, it is evident that white females have a significantly higher passing rate as compared to any of the other groups. Black males and Black females had significantly lower passing rates as do Hispanic males and females.

2. Is there a difference between transfer and non-transfer students?

The percentage of transfer students versus non-transfer students was analyzed and compared to the total percentage of students taking the test.

TABLE 3

TRANSFER vs. NON-TRANSFER

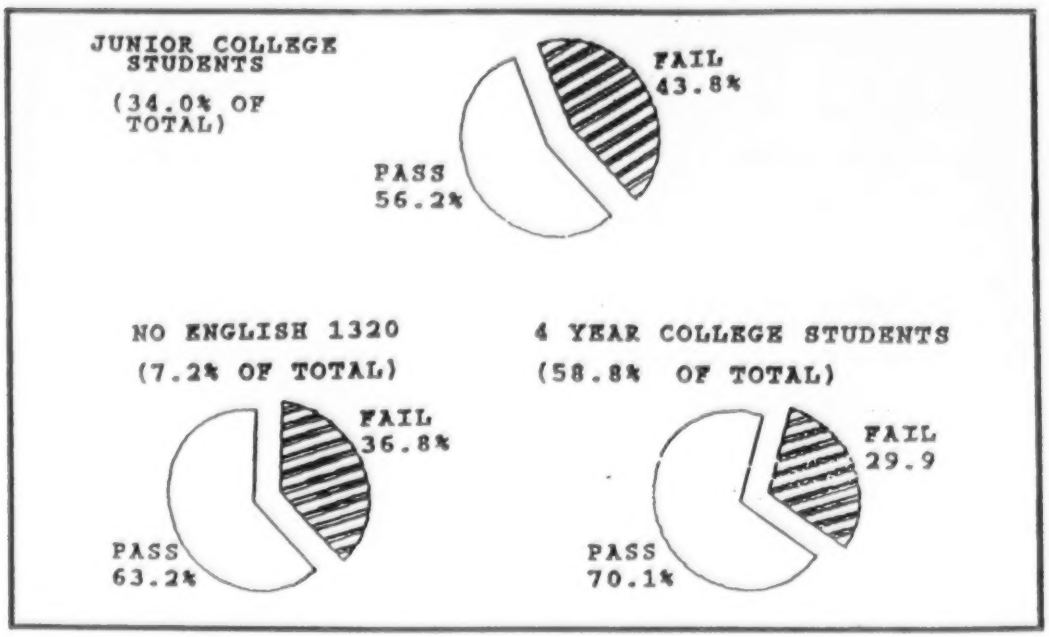
CHARACTERISTIC	SCORE AVERAGE	STANDARD DEVIATION	# OF STUDENTS FAIL	PASS	TOTAL	PERCENT PASSING	Z SCORE
TRANSFER STATUS							
Transfer	441.5	75.04	330	448	778	57.58%	-2.78
Non-Transfer	457.7	69.07	146	306	452	67.70%	1.71

It is evident that the transfer students have a significantly lower passing rate of 57.5 percent. It is worth noting that a change in the significance level from .05 to .01 does not change the outcome.

A comparison of community college transfer students versus four-year college transfer students for the June 1988 test only resulted in some interesting findings. Five hundred and twenty-four (524) students took the June 1988 test. Of these students, 308 had taken their second freshman composition course at a four-year institution. One hundred and seventy eight (178) had taken the second freshman composition course at a community college. Thirty-eight (38) students had never taken the second freshman composition course or its equivalent.

The following pie charts graphically depict the passing rate for each group.

JUNIOR COLLEGE vs.
4 YEAR COLLEGE vs.
NO ENGLISH 1320



Clearly, the junior college students have a much higher failure rate than either four year college students or those who have no equivalent freshman composition class.

3. Is there a statistical difference between majors?

The category of major includes the seven schools under which students declare a major. An undecided category was added under the heading of General Studies. Table 4 on the next page lists the results of the analysis of data derived from hypothesis testing. The analysis indicates that the School of Applied Arts and Technology was the only school that exhibited significant differences in scores. Of 428 students in the School of Applied Arts and Technology, only 54.9 passed the test.

4. Does grade-point average correlate with the test scores?

Table 5 demonstrates that both cumulative and SWT grade point average do correlate with test scores.

TABLE 5
GRADE POINT AVERAGE

CHARACTERISTIC	SCORE AVERAGE	STANDARD DEVIATION	# OF STUDENTS FAIL	PASS	TOTAL	PERCENT PASSING	Z SCORE
CUMULATIVE GPA							
0.0 - 1.99	452.8	79.56	31	25	59	42.37%	-3.28
2.0 - 2.49	431.3	71.15	288	306	594	51.52%	-5.14
2.5 - 2.99	447.3	68.04	242	475	717	66.25%	1.36
3.0 - 3.49	479.3	72.01	100	256	356	71.91%	3.08
3.5 - 4.00	493.7	68.35	11	106	117	90.60%	5.98
SOUTHWEST GPA							
0.0 - 1.99	398.3	65.49	84	38	122	31.14%	-7.08
2.0 - 2.49	425.0	67.96	208	186	394	47.20%	-5.95
2.5 - 2.99	449.8	64.59	155	300	455	65.93%	1.01
3.0 - 3.49	463.2	71.99	122	288	410	70.24%	2.63
3.5 - 4.00	495.7	70.12	32	193	225	85.77%	6.68

Due to the low number of students in the 0.00 to 1.00 range of grade point average, 1.00 to 1.99 GPA's were added to the 0.00 to 1.00 GPA. For both SWT and cumulative GPA, students who were below 2.5 GPA had a significantly higher probability of failing the GEEC exam.

5. Can a statistical model be developed to predict student scores given the students academic profile?

TABLE 4
TEST RESULTS: COLLEGE MAJOR AND RACE

CHARACTERISTIC	SCORE AVERAGE	STANDARD DEVIATION	# OF STUDENTS FAIL	PASS	TOTAL	PERCENT PASSING	Z SCORE
MAJOR/RACE							
School of Applied Arts and Technology							
Caucasian	447.882	72.785	122	191	313	61.02%	-0.797
Black	381.350	80.946	13	7	20	35.00%	-2.615
Hispanic	408.265	65.465	50	33	83	39.76%	-4.344
Other	401.250	76.999	8	4	12	33.33%	-2.151
Total					428	54.91%	-3.248
School of Business							
Caucasian	455.734	66.140	115	243	358	67.88%	1.625
Black	431.714	49.836	12	9	21	42.86%	-1.938
Hispanic	430.900	62.066	30	30	60	50.00%	-2.111
Other	418.471	69.553	9	8	17	47.06%	-1.389
Total					456	63.57%	.088
School of Education							
Caucasian	464.706	73.381	88	208	296	70.27%	2.299
Black	441.714	108.375	4	3	7	42.86%	-1.124
Hispanic	454.296	57.462	11	33	44	75.00%	1.584
Other	457.045	66.664	1	1	2	50.00%	-0.392
Total					349	68.99%	1.283
School of Fine Arts and Communication							
Caucasian	471.431	75.101	27	75	102	73.53%	2.079
Black	459.333	67.019	1	2	3	66.67%	0.118
Hispanic	426.842	88.489	10	9	19	47.37%	-1.439
Other	461.000	52.804	2	3	5	60.00%	-0.156
Total					129	68.99%	1.283
School of Health Professions							
Caucasian	442.869	65.285	25	36	61	59.02%	-0.695
Black	444.000	0.000	0	1	1	100.00%	0.760
Hispanic	441.667	80.207	9	12	21	57.14%	-0.589
Other	431.000	0.000	0	1	1	100.00%	0.760
Total					84	59.52%	-0.716
School of Liberal Arts							
Caucasian	473.897	73.902	39	117	156	75.00%	2.910
Black	444.000	80.023	1	4	5	80.00%	0.771
Hispanic	433.259	93.700	17	10	27	37.04%	-2.814
Other	403.625	97.642	6	2	8	25.00%	-2.256
Total					196	67.86%	1.241
School of Science							
Caucasian	462.489	74.840	31	59	90	65.56%	0.420
Black	409.875	69.176	4	4	8	50.00%	-0.783
Hispanic	427.647	65.408	8	9	17	52.94%	-0.888
Other	416.000	89.633	8	6	14	42.86%	-1.586
Total					129	60.47%	-0.662
School of General Studies							
Caucasian	458.785	75.776	22	43	65	66.15%	0.457
Black	444.000	0.000	0	1	1	100.00%	0.760
Hispanic	445.200	56.771	1	4	5	80.00%	0.771
Other	381.000	0.000	1	0	1	0.00%	-1.315
Total					72	66.67%	0.569

Multiple linear regression was chosen to answer this research question because the procedure accounts for as much variance as possible with as little standard error as possible. First the Pearson test for correlation was run to determine the amount of correlation between the different independent variables involved in the student profile. The multicolinearity was acceptable as the correlation between the variables was low enough so that all variables could be used in the statistical model without bias. Stepwise multiple linear regression was then used to isolate the significant variables in the order of their importance.

The characteristic which demonstrated the highest amount of variance was SWT GPA This grade-point average accounted for 12.66 percent of the variance in student test scores. Standard error for this characteristic was 68.0.

The second factor which affected the test scores most often was race. Both race and SWT GPA accounted for 15.0 percent of the variance with a standard error of 67.2.

The final regression line which represents the most variance with the least amount of standard error is:

347.72 + [15.39 (Cumm GPA) + 3.63 (major) - 16.73 (gender) - 11.93 (race) + 32.06 (SWT GPA)]

This regression line accounts for 18.13 percent of the variance with a standard error of 66.0. Thus the model predicts that GPA, race, gender, and major are indicators of success or failure on the exam.

6. What are the attitudes of students regarding the GEEC test?

To answer this question, 271 student surveys were administered. Three were rejected due to obvious erroneous responses. Fifty-two students responding to the survey had taken the exam at least once. Of the remaining 209 completed surveys, 151 students must take or retake the exam.

Students reported spending an average of five hours studying for the GEEC on their own. Of those who had taken the exam, the most common reason for no preparation was, "I felt my writing skills were sufficient to pass the exam." The most widely reported method of outside help was the CLEP Study Guide. Following this method was the SLAC lab.

The majority of the students felt that they possessed better essay skills than skill in the mechanics of writing. Fifty-nine percent of those who had taken the exam expressed a greater strength in essay writing. Sixty-nine percent of those who had not taken the exam expressed greater strength in essay writing than mechanics.

Of the students who had taken the exam, one-half reported that their English classes prepared them for the exam. On the other hand, three-fourths believed that their writing intensive classes did not prepare them for the exam.

The overall consensus of students responding to the survey was that the exam unfairly prevents students from taking upper-division classes and that it slows their progress toward acquiring their degree. Of the 97 comments received, 71 students had negative comments concerning the use of the exam.

7. Are students seeking outside help, and if so, is that help beneficial?

Of the total students who took the GEEC (1,084), only 128 sought help from the SLAC lab. Of those students,65 passed and 63 failed. This information in itself does not imply that students are not receiving the help they need from the lab; however, of those students, ninety percent did not return for help before taking the test again.

The student survey also indicates that very few students seek formal help other than the SLAC lab. Of the 52 students surveyed who had taken the exam, none sought help from Residential Hall Tutoring (dorm tutoring). Only one student attended the "Write Stuff" English lab. Two students reported attending a mock exam, and three students used study groups.

8. What are the attitudes of the faculty regarding the barrier exam, and has the test affected course curriculum?

One hundred and ninety-seven (197) faculty members were surveyed. A response rate of 39 percent (77/197) was attained. Of the respondents, 25 percent indicated that they had never heard of the exam.

Fifty-four percent of the faculty stated that the CLEP - GEEC should be the instrument used to test students writing ability. Forty-seven percent indicated that English classes and writing intensive classes prepare students for this type of exam. However, 75 percent of students did not agree that these classes prepare them for the exam.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The three major questions concerning competency testing in writing have been answered by this study. First, several common characteristics appear among students who fail the test. The high risk students are community college transfer students, minorities and students with GPA's below 2.5. In addition, students in several majors seem to have difficulty passing the test with those students in Applied Arts and Technology having the greatest difficulty. Students majoring in liberal arts, fine arts, communications, or education have a higher pass rate than other majors. When class rank is considered, the sophomore year seems to be the most successful year to take and pass the test perhaps

due to the recency of taking composition and writing intensive courses. However, transfer students were not significantly represented in this class ranking. The lowest risk students are white females Finally, students apparently do not seek assistance in preparing for the exam.

Second, a regression model can be developed which includes GPA, gender, race, and college major and which predicts eighteen percent of the variance with a standard error of 66. The model, however, needs to be refined to include variables such as English grades, SAT and ACT scores, high school background, and other such data.

Finally, insight was gained into the attitudes of faculty members and students concerning the use of the CLEP test as a barrier exam. As expected, students in general were opposed to the exam. Those students who have not yet taken the exam are confident that they will pass the exam. Both the faculty and students recommend that more writing should be required in all classes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers offer the following recommendations which are supported by the study.

1. Identify students at risk and develop programs to assist them in improving their writing skills.

A computer program should be developed to identify students (based upon GPA, race, gender, and college major) who may have difficulty in passing the exam. Tutoring programs should be developed to assist this population.

2. Increase entrance requirements.

One of the contributing factors to the high failure rate is the community college transfer student. By allowing these students easy access into SWT, the university may be automatically lowering the high standards it is seeking. An increase in entrance requirements would boost the reputation of the school.

3. Review the content of all writing intensive classes.

Seventy-five percent of students polled stated that writing intensive classes did not prepare them to pass the GEEC. Since the writing intensive requirement entails a minimum of 18 credit hours, nine of those hours usually taken in the first three semesters, an in-depth analysis should be undertaken to determine if this attitude is justified.

4. Evaluate the review programs presently being offered.

Because few students took advantage of the help sessions offered by SLAC, and few took the practice or mock tests, a review and evaluation of each program should be conducted. Further, if the evaluation indicates that these programs are solid, then a publicity campaign should be developed to insure that students are aware of assistance available.

5. Increase faculty awareness.

Because 25 percent of the faculty teaching English or writing intensive classes were unaware of the GEEC, faculty members must be made aware that this exam is a high priority issue. Professors are the direct link to students. Faculty members must inform students of the necessity to prepare for the GEEC. Documents should be prepared and mailed to all faculty with emphasis on faculty responsible for English and writing intensive classes.

6. Increase student awareness.

Assistance centers such as the SLAC lab and the Write Stuff (as noted in number four) should be highly publicized. The university should increase awareness by mailing letters to those students who will be required to take the exam.

7. Poll faculty

Since only 47 percent of faculty respondents felt that the English and writing intensive classes prepared students for the exam, an examination as to "why" this opinion was voiced, should be conducted.

8. Increase the quality of the current writing curriculum.

Many faculty members stressed that although they teach writing intensive classes, the number of students in class severely limits their ability to improve the writing skills of students. An overwhelming number of faculty members suggested limiting classes to 15 to 20 students.

The GEEC is a valid and reliable test to measure writing skills; however, this exam only evaluates and tests skills, it does not improve them. If universities are concerned with improving their academic standards, then required changes need to come from within.

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